November 7, 2009

Legislation Passes House 220 to 215

Washington, DC – Today, Rep. Ben Ray Luján voted in favor of the Affordable Health Care for America Act (H.R. 3962), which will make health insurance more affordable and accessible for all Americans. The legislation passed the House of Representatives by a vote of 220 to 215.

"The Affordable Health Care for America Act will take significant steps to reform our broken health insurance system that makes it too difficult for families to find affordable, accessible health insurance," said Rep. Luján. "Right now, too many families are being hurt by out-of-control health insurance bills, too many individuals are being denied coverage due to pre-existing conditions, and too many small businesses are struggling with a costly and inefficient system. This legislation will end insurance company discrimination and cherry-picking, make coverage more affordable and provide more options for consumers. It will level the playing field between insurance companies and consumers. And while the final public option may not be perfect, I believe it will be an important tool to increase choice and competition."

The Affordable Health Care for America Act cuts long-term health care costs and reduces the deficit by $109 billion over the first ten years. It covers 96 percent of Americans while ensuring additional stability, lower costs, higher quality, and a greater choice of health plans. The legislation also includes a public option, which will increase choice and improve competition.

Over the months leading up to today's health insurance reform debate, Rep. Luján has visited communities throughout New Mexico's 3rd Congressional District and sought input from constituents, small business owners, doctors, nurses, health care professionals, patients and policy experts. He has held over 40 events on health insurance reform.

The Affordable Health Care for America Act is supported by over 300 groups from business organizations to health advocacy groups. Among the prominent supporters are the American Medical Association

,
 AARP
and the
American Cancer Society.

Rep. Luján fought to ensure that Native Americans benefited from health insurance reform as well. Language to permanently reauthorize the Indian Health Care Improvement Act (IHCIA), which governs the Indian Health Care System (IHS), is included in the Affordable Health Care for America Act. IHS is the provider of choice for many Native American patients. Unfortunately, IHCIA was last reauthorized in 1992, and that reauthorization expired eight years ago. Reauthorization will allow much-needed reforms to the Indian Health Service to move forward.

"The job of reforming the Nation's health care system and providing access to quality care for all Americans will not be complete until such care is extended to those living in Indian Country. The House of Representatives has taken an historic vote on health insurance reform legislation that includes reauthorization of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act – the culmination of more than 10 years of efforts to extend modern health care services to Native Americans. I want to commend the work of Rep. Luján, who has been instrumental in helping to improve health care services for our native communities," said Rep. Nick J. Rahall (D-WV), Chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee.

Learn more about the Affordable Health Care for America Act:

Frequently Asked Questions about the Affordable Health Care for America Act

Rep. Luján's Health Reform Events

In New Mexico's 3rd Congressional District, the Affordable Health Care for America Act will:

• Improve employer-based coverage for 327,000 residents

• Provide credits to help pay for coverage for up to 163,000 households

• Improve Medicare for 94,000 beneficiaries, including closing the prescription drug donut hole for 8,300 seniors

• Allow 15,200 small businesses to obtain affordable health care coverage and provide tax credits to help reduce health insurance costs for up to 14,100 small businesses

• Provide coverage for 121,000 uninsured residents

• Reduce the cost of uncompensated care for hospitals and health care providers by $72 million